

The left hemisphere is specialized to control well-established patterns under ordinary and familiar circumstances. It handles positive emotions and processes verbal, conscious, rational and serial linear information. When things are familiar, orderly and predictable, the left hemisphere allows us to approach life easily, stay focused and stick to our plans (Cozolino, 2013). This makes complete sense to me, as I feel much more at ease with information, people and situations I already know. I engage more and feel more attentive in these situations.

The right hemisphere is the primary seat of emotional arousal and processes new information. It handles negative emotions and withdrawal from situations. It is also very adept at using nonverbal communication to gather information. All nonverbal, unconscious, holistic and emotional information processing takes place in the right hemisphere. It is the seat of impulse control because of its dense connections to the limbic system and the brain stem (Cozolino, 2013). This also makes sense to me because in new situations I feel a little more hesitant and am more conscious of nonverbal information from facial expressions, tone of voice and body language. I've also experienced times when too much negative emotional energy has overloaded my right prefrontal lobe and I've watched myself behave stupidly on impulse rather than with wisdom.

The chart below shows the two informational processing systems:

Left Hemisphere	Right Hemisphere
Familiar	Novel
Verbal information	Nonverbal information
Logical information	Emotional information
Conscious	Unconscious
Linear information	Holistic, big picture
Literal	Contextual
Words	Images
Letter of the law	Spirit of the law

Self-regulation starts in the right hemisphere

The right hemisphere is more densely connected to the lower centers of the brain (limbic system and brain stem). This allows us to get "gut feelings," and receive and interpret emotional information. It is also the right hemisphere that can get triggered by big emotions, prompting children to say, "I hate you! Leave me alone." Most of us attempt to discipline from a left-brain stance, but the right brain (with its strong connections to the limbic system and brain stem) is the seat of impulse control. This is why adults must verbally notice children's nonverbal behaviors and put behavioral standards in visual images. We must integrate the right and the left hemisphere in order to help children discipline themselves. Notice in the following graphic how the energy from the lower centers of the brain flows up to the right hemisphere.